

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 069261 TOSEC 030070
ORIGIN SS-25

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE IMMEDIATE
INFO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 069261 TOSEC 030070

EXDIS
STADIS///SINGAPORE FOR AMBASSADOR, MOSCOW FOR HABIB

E.O. 11652: GDS

TA : OVIP, SN

SUBJECT:PROPOSED VISIT BY LEE KUAN YEW

REF: SINGAPORE 1219

1. WITH AN UNUSUALLY HEAVY SCHEDULE OF PRESSING, HIGH PRIORITY COMMITMENTS IN MAY, THE PRESIDENT CANNOT AT THIS TIME SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER LEE DURING HIS PROJECTED "PRIVATE" VISIT HERE. IF LEE'S VISIT IS CONTINGENT UPON AN ASSURED MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT, IT MIGHT THUS BE MORE REALISTIC FOR THE VISIT TO BE DEFERRED. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, LEE DECIDES TO PROCEED WITH THE MAY ITINERARY, WE WILL OF COURSE DO OUR BEST TO INSURE THAT HE HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH

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SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON. WE ARE REASONABLY CONFIDENT THAT SECRETARY VANCE WILL BE ABLE TO MEET HIM.

2. WHAT CONCERNS US IN THIS IS THAT LEE, DURING HIS LAST FEW VISITS, HAS HAD ALMOST AUTOMATIC ENTREE TO THE WHITE HOUSE (INCLUDING, AT HIS MOST RECENT VISIT IN

MAY 1975, A WHITE HOUSE DINNER IN HIS HONOR). WE ARE ANXIOUS THAT HE NOT READ INTO OUR INABILITY TO SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT ANY UNWARRANTED CONCLUSIONS

AS TO CHANGES IN US POLICY OR IN US REGARD FOR SINGAPORE. THE PROBLEM IS SIMPLY ONE OF TIMING AND THE PRESIDENT'S HEAVY MAY SCHEDULE.

3. SEEMS TO US THE BEST WAY TO HANDLE THE PROBLEM WOULD BE TO DISCUSS IT FRANKLY WITH LEE BEFORE YOUR DEPARTURE. YOU SHOULD EXPLAIN TO HIM THE PROBLEM POSED BY THE PRESIDENT'S SCHEDULE, ASSURE HIM THAT USG CONTINUES TO HOLD HIM IN THE HIGHEST REGARD, AND STRESS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET AND EXCHANGE VIEWS WITH HIM IF HE COMES TO WASHINGTON IN MAY.

4. FYI. LEE HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH BOB BARNETT OF THE ASIA SOCIETY AND WITH SENATOR KENNEDY REGARDING HIS PROPOSED VISIT. WE UNDERSTAND SENATOR KENNEDY WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN ARRANGING THE HONORARY DEGREE BY THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS, WHILE THE ASIA SOCIETY HAS SUGGESTED SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS FOR HIM (E.G., A DINNER IN HIS HONOR BY THE CHICAGO COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS). END FYI.
CHRISTOPHER

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NNN

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